

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

### **Listing of the claims:**

1-32 (canceled)

33 (new): A method for preventing the initiation, development, or progression of melanoma comprising administering to a patient in need thereof a compound that is an endothelin B receptor (ETB) specific antagonist.

34 (new): A method for preventing the initiation, development, or progression of a melanocyte or melanocyte-related cell into a melanoma cell in a patient in need thereof comprising administering to the patient a compound that is an ETB specific antagonist.

35 (new): The method of claim 34 wherein the melanocyte or melanocyte-related cell displays an alteration in one or more of the following: cell growth, cell-to-cell interaction, cellular membrane content, cytoskeletal structure, protein secretion, gene expression, or cell mortality.

36 (new): The method of claim 34 wherein the patient displays one or more atypical moles.

37 (new): The method of claim 33 wherein said ETB specific antagonist is selected from the group consisting of a peptide inhibitor, a small molecule inhibitor, and an ETB antibody.

38 (new): The method of claim 34 wherein said ETB specific antagonist is selected from the group consisting of a peptide inhibitor, a small molecule inhibitor, and an ETB antibody.

39 (new): A method for preventing the initiation, development, or progression of melanoma comprising administering to a patient in need thereof a compound that is an endothelin B receptor (ETB) specific antagonist, wherein said ETB specific antagonist is selected from the group consisting of a peptide inhibitor, a small molecule inhibitor, and an ETB antibody.

40 (new): The method of Claim 39 wherein the usefulness of said ETB specific antagonist for the treatment of melanoma is evaluated by an *in vitro* assay comprising:

- a) contacting a cell expressing ETB and E-cadherin with endothelin and the compound; and
- b) determining the level of E-cadherin expression,

wherein if the level of E-cadherin expression in cells contacted with endothelin in the absence of the compound is decreased compared to the level of E-cadherin expression in cells contacted with endothelin and the compound, the compound has usefulness for the treatment of melanoma.

41 (new): A method for preventing the initiation, development, or progression of melanoma comprising administering to a patient in need thereof an ETB specific antagonist selected from the group consisting of BQ788, IRL-1038, and RES-701-1.

42 (new): A method for preventing the initiation, development, or progression of melanoma comprising administering to a patient in need thereof a compound that prevents the downregulation of E-cadherin in a melanocyte or melanocyte-related cell, wherein said compound is an ETB specific antagonist selected from the group consisting of a peptide inhibitor, a small molecule inhibitor, and an ETB antibody, wherein said melanocyte or melanocyte-related cell treated with said ETB specific antagonist has a level of E-cadherin similar to a second melanocyte or melanocyte-related cell treated with BQ788 as evaluated by an *in vitro* assay comprising:

- a) contacting a first melanocyte or melanocyte-related cell expressing ETB and E-cadherin with endothelin and said ETB specific antagonist;
- b) contacting a second melanocyte or melanocyte-related cell expressing ETB and E-cadherin with endothelin and BQ788; and
- c) determining the level of E-cadherin expression in said first and second contacted melanocytes or melanocyte-related cells,

wherein if the level of E-cadherin expression in said first melanocyte or melanocyte-related cell is similar to the level of E-cadherin expression in said second melanocyte or melanocyte-related cell, then the compound shows usefulness for the treatment of melanoma.